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Martial Arts

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Not everything in Cularin revolves around the Jedi. Among the movers and shakers, five mysterious figures take the stage as a new power enters the system. Muster your strength if you care to join them, and learn of the Five Masters in our latest supplement to the Living Force campaign!

Despite the opinions of many, not everything in the Cularin system revolves around the Jedi. There are many movers and shakers among the worlds and asteroids here, some of whom have no affiliation with Almas, Coruscant, or any other world controlled by the "upholders of law" who wield the Force. Everyone from criminals with a vested interest in keeping Cularin free of the Thare threat to legislators doing everything they can to ensure our safety exist in this system, and none of them wear robes... well, most of them don't.

He moved as quickly as he could to the landing bay. Traffic had been murder, almost literally. Another pile-up caused by an overturned OPS speeder and a handful of stunned and injured officers. Again, the WOLF had become active, and their spray-tint logos could be found on administrative and police buildings all over Gadrin. Who on Cularin were these "Wookiee Liberation Front" people, and just what in the cosmos did Wookiees even need to be liberated from in the first place?

Infuriated at the delay, he waved aside the security at the spaceport and moved with his entourage to the hangar indicated on his assistant's datapad. Even with the delay, he was not apparently late. Thank the stars for small favors, he murmured to himself as he waited below the extending ramp.

The ship beside Governor Chistor was a sleek model from one of the Outer Rim manufacturers. He did not recognize its make, but he knew what it likely cost. The fact that it carried several obvious weapons made him uncomfortable, but he had been assured of its peaceful intentions. Well, "peaceful" might not be the appropriate word, but the dignitaries aboard it were not here to harm Cularin. In Barnab's mind, that was the first piece of good news he had received all month.

The ramp came to a soft stop at the ground, and from within the shadowed portal at its top, several pale lights glimmered into existence. These were glow poles, five-foot rods of silver metal with incandescent spheres atop them, and they were borne by more than thirty children. The youths came slowly out of the transport, walking in two perfect lines. Between them, five robed figures - - each wearing a different color - - strode out gracefully.

Barnab Chistor waited patiently as the five Masters reached the bottom of the ramp and the children around them formed a perfect circle of light

surrounding the gathering. He was not sure why these legendary people were here on Cularin, but he was determined to make them feel welcome. He raised one hand in a sign of greeting and spoke clearly, "Cularin welcomes you, as do I, Barnab Chistor, Governor of this world."

The Master in White walked forward two steps and nodded slightly. Inside the cowl of his robe, the figure's face could be glimpsed slightly. Barnab was startled to see the man's extremely pale skin and eyes the shade of bright, fresh blood, but his years of diplomatic experience helped him cover the reaction quickly.

"We accept your greeting and return it. The Five Masters will be staying here until we decide to leave again. Has our academy been prepared strictly by the instructions given to you, Chistor of Cularin?"

Barnab nodded quickly. "Your message was quite clear," he said as the entire delegation turned and began walking towards the exit of the spaceport. The children around them kept perfect pace, moving the ring of glow poles exactly circular as they walked. It was like a pale halo surrounding them at all times; Barnab found it both unsettling and oddly soothing at the same time.

The children broke formation only when the group reached the large speeders waiting for them. They filed into the vehicles six at a time in perfect unison. Behind them, each of the Masters also boarded, until only one was left to stand beside Barnab on the walkway. This time, the Master was a woman, and by the way her violet hood peaked around her brow, Barnab guessed she was a Zabrak. "You have questions?" she asked impassively.

He nodded as they climbed into his personal speeder and pulled away from the port. "Yes. Why have you come here? You are, of course, welcome. It is a great honor to have the Five Masters on Cularin, and you are welcome to stay -

- "

She raised a purple gloved hand and interrupted him. "We do not need to stand on pleasantries. I will answer your question on the condition that you speak to no one of what I tell you." Her golden-yellow eyes glittered in the shadow of her hood, and he was suddenly struck by how beautiful she was. He agreed with a simple nod.

"This place has been gifted with a special energy. Cularin has been removed from time and returned, but time - - like energy - - cannot be created or destroyed. We study energy and motion, both of which this system has in unique abundance. Until we learn what we want to know, we will not leave."

He thought about her answer for several minutes, and by the time he looked up again, the city of Gadrin was long gone. They were in the jungle now, heading toward the distant building constructed to the Master's exact specifications and on the precise spot they had requested. He had many more questions, such as how they had secured the Tarasin's permission to use that land or where the materials to build their new home had come from, but only one was pressing enough for him to ask now.

"Why an academy? Surely teaching will only distract you from your investigation."

The Zabrak woman looked ahead, staring into the trees speeding by as if the green blurs held the answer to his inquiry. "Teaching your people is part of our investigation. The energy I speak of pervades you and has become part of your minds, bodies, and souls. We must see how it has affected you and how it will affect us."

As she spoke, Barnab saw the faint lines of a tattoo on her face. It was very subtle, but he recognized it as the mark borne by those following the K'thri style of Martial Arts. This Zabrak was the K'thri Master, then. He had studied all the lore on the Five Masters he could find after receiving their communication four months ago, but nothing in his files had listed which style each Master represented.

His thoughts carried him until the speeder came to a slow stop. They were at the crystal and steel building the Masters had instructed him to construct. The contractors had done an admirable job, which was not surprising given how much they had been paid. It was a majestic edifice, rising three stories into the sky and spired all around with shafts of gleaming glass.

Behind him, the Masters had left their speeders and were examining the building as well. He could see that one of them, the Master robed in Green, was obviously a Wookiee, which probably suggested that he was the Master of Wrruushi. The Master in Black was shorter than the others and completely hidden by his robes. Barnab caught himself staring at them until they and the children had gone inside - - all except for the Zabrak.

She stood nearby, looking back at him intently. "We will begin seeing prospective students now. We have chosen only one to begin training. The rest will have to prove themselves."

Barnab nodded and stared moving toward his speeder. "I understand. I will take word of this back to - - " He was interrupted again, this time by a firm hand on his shoulder. The Zabrak had closed the distance between them breathtakingly fast.

"Students may not leave until given permission by their chosen Master. Your assistant can send word back to your people. You must remain here until I am satisfied with your progress. Come along, learner Chistor." And with that, she turned and quietly flowed up the cut crystal steps of the Five Masters Academy.